

## Elements of Effective Adolescent Literacy Programs

A comprehensive literacy program targeted to adolescent students should include the elements discussed in *Reading First*. Based on recent research findings, this 2004 report to the Carnegie Corporation of New York articulated a vision for action and research in middle and high school literacy. A comprehensive literacy program targeted to older students would include many of the following elements:

1. **Direct, explicit comprehension instruction:** Instruction makes reading comprehension strategies explicit to students through modeling and explanation and gives students ample opportunities for practice.
2. **Effective instructional principles embedded in content:** Instruction is embedded and reinforced across content areas, with attention paid to context-specific texts and tasks.
3. **Motivation and self-directed learning:** Instruction promotes engagement and self-regulated learning for the development of motivated and flexible literacy skills.
4. **Text-based collaborative learning:** Instruction enables students to engage in guided interactions with texts in groups in order to foster learning of new knowledge.
5. **Strategic tutoring:** Individualized instruction is more intense for struggling readers and focuses on instilling independence.
6. **Diverse texts:** Students have access to, and experience with, texts at a variety of difficulty levels that vary in the styles, genres, topics, and content areas they cover.
7. **Intensive writing:** Instruction should integrate writing as a vehicle for learning and as a measure of comprehension and learning across content areas.
8. **A technology component:** Technology is used to leverage instructional time to provide additional support and practice for students as well as prepare students for the ways different technologies alter the reading and writing experience.
9. **Ongoing formative assessment of students:** Instruction should be determined by the use of ongoing assessment of students that helps teachers target instruction.

Source: National Governors Association Center for Best Practices. (2005). *Reading to achieve: A governor's guide to adolescent literacy*. Washington, DC: Author.

10. **Extended time for literacy:** Reading and writing instruction takes place for longer than a single language arts period and is extended through integration and emphasis across curricula. Extended time may also include additional time devoted to literacy instruction, especially for learners more than two grade levels behind.
11. **Professional development:** Teachers participate in professional development experiences that are systematic, frequent, long-term, and ongoing to improve their ability to teach reading and writing across the curriculum.
12. **Ongoing, summative assessment for students and programs:** Student progress is monitored and tracked over the long term.
13. **Teacher teams:** Infrastructure supports teachers working in small, interdisciplinary teams to allow for collaboration and more consistent and coordinated instruction and professional development.
14. **Leadership:** Principals and administrators participate in professional development and foster teachers taking leadership roles.
15. **A comprehensive and coordinated literacy program:** Instruction encompasses all aspects of literacy in ways that allow all facets of the program to complement one another and is consistent with professional development as well as the chosen materials and approaches to learning.

Implementation of only one or two of these elements is unlikely to improve the literacy achievement of many students. Any combination should include professional development, formative assessment, and summative assessment.